

Message Text

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17

ACTION PM-07

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 EUR-25 NEA-14 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00

PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01

PRS-01 SP-03 SS-20 USIA-15 IO-14 ACDA-19 SAJ-01 NIC-01

SAM-01 MMS-03 AID-20 EB-11 COME-00 OMB-01 DRC-01 /196 W

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R 150629Z MAY 74

FM AMEMBASSY JIDDA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7092

INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

S E C R E T JIDDA 2662

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, MARR, SA, XF

SUBJECT: THE INDIAN OCEAN

REF: NEW DELHI 5616

SUMMARY: BY TRADITION AND HISTORY, SAUDI ARABIA IS NOT SENSITIZED, AS MANY AFRICAN AND ASIAN COUNTRIES ARE, TO THE COLONIAL THREAT FROM THE SEA. IT HAS BEEN ARABIA'S EXPERIENCE THAT THREATS TO AUTONOMY HAVE TENDED TO PROCEED OVERLAND VIA FELLOW MOSLEMS FROM THE NORTH. SAUDIS AWARE, HOWEVER, OF SOVIET ACTIVITIES IN ADEN, AND INsofar AS THEY THINK ABOUT US NAVAL ACTIONS AT ALL, THEY TEND TO REGARD THEM AS VAGUELY POSITIVE IN THIS CONTEXT. THESE POSITIVE ATTITUDES MAY STRENGTHEN AS OUR ONE BILLION DOLLAR PROGRAM FOR SAUDI NAVAL DEVELOPMENT PROCEEDS. SAG'S VIEWS WOULD NOT BE AFFECTED IF US NAVAL OPERATIONS IN INDIAN OCEAN BECAME MORE CONTROVERSIAL THAN THEY ARE NOW TO

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AFRICANS AND ASIANS. IF ARABS, HOWEVER, BECOME INVOLVED ,

OR IF THIRD WORLD IS CALLED UPON AT THE UN TO STAND AND BE COUNTED, SAUDIS WOULD PROBABLY GO ALONG WITH THE MAJORITY AS INCONSPICUOUSLY AS POSSIBLE. END SUMMARY.

1. RECENT VISIT BY SECRETARY OF STATE KISSINGER TO SAUDI ARABIA AND PREPARATIONS FOR IMMINENT VISIT TO US BY MINISTER OF INTERIOR PRINCE FAHD HAVE GIVEN EMBASSY OFFICIALS OPPORTUNITY FOR UNUSUALLY COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW WITH SAG OF ITS CURRENT POLICY CONCERNS. NOT SURPRISINGLY, THE QUESTION OF DIEGO GARCIA, THE INDIAN OCEAN, AND US NAVAL ACTIVITIES DID NOT ARISE.

2. IN DAYS WHEN THE OIL BOYCOTT WAS AT ITS HIGHEST, AND US FLEET CRUISING IN VICINITY OF PERSIAN GULF, EMBASSY DETECTED SOME SLIGHT SAUDI UNEASINESS ABOUT OUR NAVAL PRESENCE. THIS HAS NOW DISSIPATED.

3. AS A MATTER OF CULTURE AND HISTORY, SAUDI ARABIA HAS NEVER ACQUIRED THE SENSITIVITY TO THREAT FROM THE SEA THAT EUROPEAN COLONIALISM IMPRINTED ON THE SUB-CONTINENT, AFRICA, AND SOUTH EAST ASIA. THE INTELLECTUAL CLIMATE OF SAUDI ARABIA HAS BEEN INWARD LOOKING, AND INTENSELY CONTINENTAL. THE FOREIGN PERSPECTIVES WHICH SOME PERSIAN GULF STATES AND THE HADHRAMANT ACQUIRED THROUGH ASIAN AND AFRICAN TRADE NEVER REACHED INLAND TO THE DESERT PLATEAU OF THE NEJD. HISTORICALLY, IN FACT, THREATS TO ARABIAN AUTONOMY--EITHER IN THE NEJD OR THE HEJAZ--HAVE TENDED TO COME OVERLAND FROM FELLOW MOSLEMS, SUCH AS EGYPT (AS IN 1819 AND 1963) OR FROM THE OTTOMANS DURING THE ARAB REVOLT OF 1917-18. TODAY, THE MOST IMMEDIATE SECURITY THREAT OF MAGNITUDE TO THE SAG IS IRAQ WITH WHICH SAUDI ARABIA HAS A LONG NORTHERN BORDER.

4. SAUDIS ARE OF COURSE AWARE OF THE RUSSIAN NAVAL PRESENCE IN ADEN, AND ARE CONCERNED ABOUT THE PDY'S CAMPAIGN OF TERRORISM AND SUBVERSION AGAINST NORTH YEMEN AND DHOFAR. INsofar AS SAUDIS, THEREFORE, THINK ABOUT A US NAVAL PRESENCE IN THE AREA, THEY REGARD IT (IN NORMAL TIMES) AS A RESTRAINT ON UNHINDERED SOVIET ACTION ABOUT THEIR PERIPHERY. SAUDI VIEWS OF THE USN MAY BECOME MORE POSITIVE AS OUR SPONSORSHIP OF A ONE BILLION DOLLAR SAUDI NAVAL DEVELOPMENT EFFORT PROGRESSES.

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5. THIS REMOTE, PREDOMINANTLY BENEVOLENT ATTITUDE WOULD PROBABLY NOT BE AFFECTED BY AN UPSWING OF AFRICAN AND ASIAN CONCERN OF DIEGO GARCIA. THE ISSUE, HOWEVER, MIGHT BE BROUGHT CLOSER TO HOME IF THE AFRO-ASIANS ENLISTED MUCH ARAB OPINION BEHIND CRITICISM OF OUR NAVAL EXPANSION IN THE INDIAN OCEAN. IN SUCH A CASE, THE SAG WOULD PROBABLY TRY TO DUCK THE ISSUE OR--AT THE UN--MIGHT INCONSPICUOUSLY, AND FOR

FORM'S SAKE, FOLLOW THE MAJORITY.

6. WITH RESPECT TO NEW DELHI'S PROPOSAL THAT ISSUE RECEIVE
A THOROUGH AIRING, FROM OUR POINT OF VIEW THE LESS SAID ABOUT
DIEGO GARCIA AND THE INDIAN OCEAN, THE BETTER.
AKINS

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